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Com okays Eden Research special use permit renewal

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Last week was a busy one for Eden Research, LLC and several permitting agencies as the Lyon County Planning Commission and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection each reviewed different permitting aspects of the company's planned soil amendment research and processing plant in Dayton.

The Lyon County Planning Commission voted unanimously on Sept. 8 to renew a special use permit for Eden Research, LLC/Glenn Family Trust for a soil amendment research and processing plant in Dayton's light industrial center on Air Park Vista Blvd., off of Lakes Boulevard and Dayton Valley Road. The original Special Use Permit was approved in September, 2007 -with 11 conditions.

The permit grants Eden permission to operate a research and processing facility for the development and processing of earth materials for agricultural applications on approximately 6.3 acres.

County Code in effect when the original permit was issued requires annual review.

One Dayton resident, Ronald Adams, said in a July 8 e-mail, what many residents are now echoing: "This one flew under the radar, a gold and silver refinery disguised as a research facility."

One condition of the permit is that all requirements set by the county building and planning departments, Central Lyon County Fire Protection District and other agencies with jurisdiction must be met.

A petition carrying what residents said was more than 300 signatures to deny the Special Use Permit, as well as a recommendation from the Dayton Regional Advisory Council to deny the permit was considered by the commission prior to the permit approval.

However, the permit says, "No change in the terms and conditions of the special use permit, as approved, shall be undertaken without first submitting the changes to Lyon County and having them modified through a public hearing process."

NEDP hearing draws more attention to Eden

Heightened attention regarding the type of earth materials that the company plans to process came after public notices were published in several area newspapers announcing the permit application and public hearing for NDEP to make a determination regarding a water pollution control permit.

The announcement explained that Eden wants to operate a beneficiation and chemical process facility designed to extract gold and silver from various ores and in the process generate a byproduct that has the potential for use as a soil amendment.

But what has the majority of residents in an uproar over the choice of a light industrial park as a

location for the facility when the company plans to use sodium cyanide and other chemical reagents to extract the precious metals from the ore. That, along with the potential of allowing 36,000 tons of ore per year to be hauled to the 56,000-square-foot processing plant by truck using the only bridge in Dayton and Dayton Valley Road which also serves hundreds of residential properties and three schools --in addition to the being a feeder road to the light industrial park.

During the hearing Mary Mains, CEO of Eden said the ore would come from gravel pits at the Boca quarry in California west of Reno and from Fredericksburg, Calif., south of Minden.

Those concerned with the project cited flooding in that area and the potential for cyanide contamination and poisoning, negative effects on property values and increased truck traffic as their major concerns.

The public hearing was attended by about 40 people where NEDP and Eden gave information relevant to the water pollution control permit aspect of Eden's permitting process. The meeting was strictly about water pollution, and not if Eden should have a processing facility in Dayton.

When it comes to water pollution, Lyon County Utilities Director Mike Workman had previously reported to the Lyon County Board of Commissioners that a facility inspection revealed there is no discharge from this facility into the sewer collection system in Dayton. Workman said the floor drains have been capped and are not connected to the sewer system.

Though several residents expressed concerns, none were specific to the hearing's purpose, the water pollution control permit.

Leslie Sexton, chairperson for the DRAC asked those residents where they were during the initial permitting process.

Eden defends its processing plant

Company officials said the soil treatment process is the company's main product, and that metals extraction wasn't considered until fairly recently when they realized the gold and silver could help to pay for some of the company's operation.

Andrew Hammond, a contracted engineer for Eden said he designed the facility to have zero leaks -- with redundant design to be more than three times as protective of the environment as the state and federal government requires.

"The facility is completely sealed down with the exception of the restrooms," Hammond said as he took the people on a slide tour of the building noting each measure the company had taken to ensure there could be no accidental spills which could potentially leak into the soil.

He noted that any water or other liquids would be reused until such time as it would be necessary to hire an appropriate company to haul the liquids and/or sludge away for appropriate disposal.

Mains said Eden has a proprietary process invented by Dr. Leonard Thompson, PhD, to chemically break down soil and release the trace minerals contained in the ore which becomes a product that increases plant production and nutrient content.

Thompson said of his discovery, "The soil enhancement is from soluble micro nutrients --not a pile of fertilizer."

She said the company will use the same chemicals that were listed originally --but in smaller quantities than were originally estimated.

She also told Planning Commission members during their meeting, "We're not using one ounce more than was originally listed. Our process re-mineralizes worn-out soil. A lot of our land is dead and lots of farmers are begging to be part of our test plots. Unfortunately, the last permit (applied for through NDEP) said gold and silver."

Eden cannot begin operation until NEDP approves its water pollution permit request and there are several other permits and inspections that would also have to be obtained. NDEP estimated it would be several weeks before the agency would issue a decision.
